

HISTORY
OF
WHITTINGTON
AND
HIS CAT.



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WHITTINGTON

AND

HIS CAT.

IN the reign of King Edward the Third there was born in a village in Yorkshire a little boy, called DICK WHITTINGTON whose father and mother died when he was so very young, that he remembered nothing at all about them, and he was left a helpless little fellow.

Yet he was a very sharp boy. On Sundays he never failed to get near the farmers, as they sat talking on the tombstones in the church-yard, before the parson was come; and once a-week you might be sure to see Dick leaning against the sign-post of the village alehouse, where people stopped to drink as they came from the market town; and whenever the barber's shop-door was open, Dick listened to all the news he told his customers.

In this manner Dick heard of the great city of London; how the people who lived there were all fine gentlemen and ladies; that there was singing and music in

it all day long; and that the streets were paved all over with gold.

One day, a carrier, with eight pack-horses, all with bells at their heads, passed through the village, while Dick was lounging near his favourite sign-post. The



thought struck him, that they must be going to the fine town of London; and, taking courage, he asked the carrier to let him walk with him. The man, hearing from poor Dick that he was an orphan, told him he might go if he would: so they set off together.

Dick got safe to London ; and so eager was he to see the fine streets paved over with gold, that he ran as fast as he could through several streets, expecting every moment to come to those that were all paved with gold ; and he imagined he had only to take up some little bits of the pavement, to have as much money as he desired.

Poor Dick ran till he was tired, and at last, finding that it grew dark, and that whichever way he turned, he saw no gold, he sat down in a dark corner, and fell asleep.

Dick remained all night in the streets, and next morning, being very hungry, he got up and walked about, asking those he met to give him something to keep him from starving ; but nobody staid to answer him, so that the poor boy was soon in the most miserable condition. Being almost starved to death, he laid himself down at the door of Mr. Fitzwarren, a rich merchant. Here he was soon perceived by Cicely the cook, who was an ill-tempered woman : so seeing poor Dick she called out, " What business have you here, you lazy rogue ? "

Just at this time Mr. Fitzwarren himself came home to dinner, and seeing a dirty ragged boy lying at the door, said to him, "Why do you lie there, my lad? You seem old enough to work. I fear you must be somewhat idle."—"No, indeed," says Whittington; "I would work with all my heart, but I know nobody, and I am very sick for want of food."—"Poor fellow!" answered Mr. Fitzwarren; "get up and let us see what ails thee."

Dick now tried twice to rise, but fell down again, being too weak to stand; for he had not eaten any thing for three days. So the kind merchant took him into his house, and ordered that he should have a good dinner immediately, and that he should be kept to do for the cook what work he was able.

Dick would have lived very happily in this family, had it not been for the cook, who continued to find fault and to scold him from morning till night; and when the spit was out of her hands, she would be at basting poor Dick with a broom, or any thing else that happened to fall in her way.

But Mr. Fitzwarren's footman was poor

Richard's friend; and the footman was very fond of reading. When few books were to be had, he used generally in the evening to entertain his fellow-servants when they had done their work, with some amusing story. The pleasure of the little hero took in hearing him, made him



very much desire to learn to read too so the good-natured footman bought him a horn book; and with a little of his help Dick soon learned his letters, and afterwards to read.

Besides the ill humour of the cook

which, now, however, was somewhat abated, Whittington had another hardship to get over : this was, that his bed was in a garret, where there were so many holes in the floor and walls, that he never went to bed without being awaked by great numbers of rats and mice, which ran over his face, and made such a noise, that he sometimes thought the walls were tumbling down about him.

One day, a gentleman who paid a visit to Mr. Fitzwarren, happened to request that his shoes might be cleaned. Dick took great pains to make them shine, and the gentleman gave him a penny. This he resolved to lay out in buying a cat ; and the next day, seeing a little girl with a cat under her arm, he went up to her, and asked if she would let him have it for a penny ; to which the girl replied, she would, for her mother had more cats than she could keep.

This cat Whittington concealed in the garret, always taking care to carry her a part of his dinner : and in a short time, he had no further disturbance from the rats and mice, and slept as soundly as he could desire.

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Soon after this, Mr. Fitzwarren, who had a ship ready to sail, richly laden, thinking it but just that all his servants should have some chance for good luck as well as himself, called them before him, and asked them what commodities they chose to send.

All mentioned something they were willing to venture; but poor Whittington, having no money nor goods, could send nothing at all, for which reason he did not come in with the rest; but Mrs. Alice ordered him to be called, and offered to lay down some money for him out of her own purse; but this, the merchant observed, would not do, for it must be something of his own.

Upon this poor Dick said he had nothing but a cat, which he bought for a penny that was given him.

"Fetch thy cat, boy," says Mr. Fitzwarren, "and let her go."

Whittington brought poor puss, and delivered her to the captain, with tears in his eyes; for he said, "He should now again be kept awake all night by the rats and mice."

Mistress Alice, who felt the greatest

pity for the poor boy, gave him some money to buy another cat.

This, and several other marks of kindness shown by Mistress Alice, made the ill-tempered cook so jealous of the favours the poor boy received, that she began to use him more cruelly than ever.



At last the unhappy little fellow, being unable to bear this treatment any longer, determined to run away from his place, packed up the few things that belonged to him, and resolved to return to Yorkshire. He travelled as far as Holloway, and there sat sown on a stone, which to this day, is

called *Whittington's Stone*, and began to consider whether he should revisit his native village.

While he was thus thinking, Bow bells of which there were then only six, began to ring; and it seemed to him that the sounds addressed him in this manner:

“ Turn again, Whittington,
Thrice Mayor of London.”

“ Thrice Mayor of London !” says he to himself. “ Why, to be sure, I would be any thing to be Lord Mayor of London and ride in a fine coach ! Well, I will go back, and think nothing of all the cuffing and scolding of old Cicely, if I am at last to be even once Lord Mayor of London.”

So back went Dick, and luckily got in to the house, and set about his business before Cicely came down stairs.

The ship, with the cat on board, was long beaten about at sea, and was at last driven by contrary winds on the coast of Barbary, inhabited by Moors.

The natives of this country came in great numbers to see the people on board, who were of so different a colour from themselves, and showed great eagerness to

purchase the fine things with which the ship was laden.

The captain, seeing this, sent patterns of the choicest articles he had to the king of the country, who was so much pleased with them, that he sent for the captain and his chief mate to the palace. Here they were placed on rich carpets, flowered with gold and silver; and the king and queen being seated at the upper end of the room, dinner was brought in, which consisted of the greatest rarities.

No sooner, however, were the dishes set before the company, than an amazing number of rats and mice rushed in, and devoured every dish, scattering pieces of flesh all about the palace.

The captain, extremely astonished, asked if these vermin were not very offensive. The king answered, that he would give half his treasure to be free of them; for they not only destroyed his dinner, but they disturbed him even in his chamber, so that he was obliged to be watched while he slept.

The captain jumped for joy, remembering poor Whittington's hard case, and the cat he had intrusted to his care, and told

the king he had a creature on board his ship, that would destroy the vermin, and save the kingdom.

The king was overjoyed, "Bring this creature to me," says he; "and if she can really perform what you say, I will load your ship with gold dust and ivory in exchange for her."



Away ran the captain to the ship, while another dinner was providing, and taking puss under his arm, returned to the palace, in time to see the second dinner meet with the same fate as the first.

The cat, at sight of them, did not wait

for bidding ; but sprang from the captain's arm, and in a few moments laid the greatest part of the rats and mice dead at her feet, while the rest, in the greatest fright imaginable, scampered away to their hiding-places.

The king having seen and considered of the wonderful exploits of the Cat, and being informed that she would soon produce a progeny scarcely less than that of the rats, which might in time destroy all the rats and mice in the country, bargained with the captain for his whole ship's cargo, and afterwards agreed to give a prodigious quantity of gold dust, of still greater value, for the cat, with which, after taking leave of their majesties, and other great African personages, he, with all his ship's company, set sail for England, and, after a happy voyage, arrived in the port of London.

One morning, Mr. Fitzwarren had just entered the counting-house, when, who should arrive but the captain and mate of the merchant-ship the Unicorn, just arrived from the coast of Barbary, and followed by several men, bringing with them a prodigious quantity of gold, that had been paid by the king of Barbary, in exchange

for the merchandise, and also in exchange for puss. Mr. Fitzwarren, the instant he heard the news, ordered Whittington to be called, and thus addressing him, said, "Richard, most heartily do I rejoice in the news our skipper has brought you for he has sold your cat to the king of Barbary, and brought you in return more riches than I possess in the whole world and may you long enjoy them!"

Dick could scarcely contain himself for joy; he begged his master to take what part of it he pleased, since to his kindness he was indebted for the whole, "No, no, this wealth is all your own, and just as so," answered Mr. Fitzwarren.

Whittington, however, was too kind hearted to keep all himself; and, accordingly, made a handsome present to the captain, the mate, and every one of the ship's company, and afterwards to his excellent friend the footman, and the rest of Mr. Fitzwarren's servants, not even excepting the cook, old Cicely.

After this, Mr. Fitzwarren advised him to get himself dressed as might become a gentleman.

When Dick Whittington was dressed

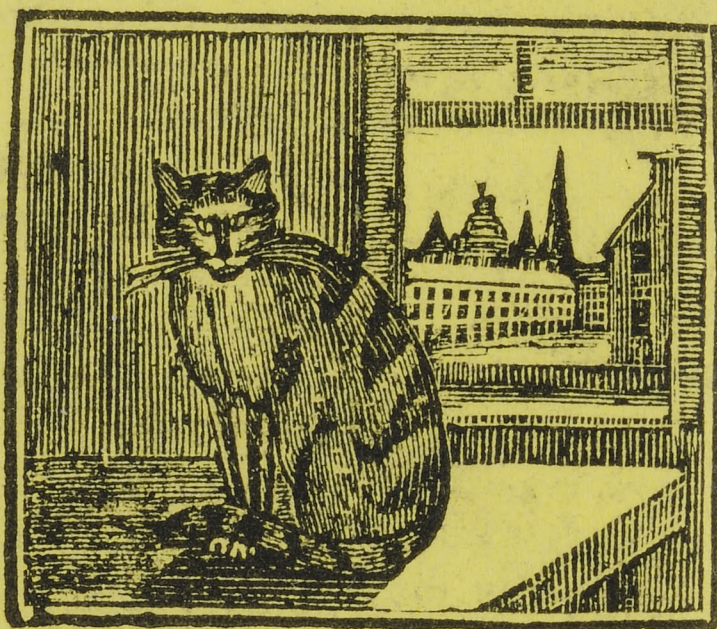
in a fashionable suit of clothes, he appeared as handsome and genteel as any young man; so that Mistress Alice, who had formerly thought of him with compassion, now considered him as fit to be her lover.

Mr. Fitzwarren, perceiving their affection for each other, proposed that they should take each other in marriage; to which, without difficulty, they each consented; and, accordingly, a day for the wedding was soon fixed, and they were attended to church by the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen, the Sheriffs, and a great number of the wealthiest merchants in London; and the ceremony was succeeded by a most elegant entertainment and splendid ball.

History tells us, that Mr. Whittington and his lady lived in great splendour and happiness; that they had several children: that he was Sheriff of London in the year 1393, in the reign of the unfortunate Richard the Second; and that he was *three* times elected Lord Mayor of London, in the reigns of three kings, Richard the Second, Henry the Fourth, and the Conqueror of France, Henry the Fifth, whom Whittington entertained in state after the king returned from his campaigns.

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